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*KAMENEV IN ROME*¹

"I am grateful to Rome for the five months I have spent there. . . .
I left Italy in love with her. . . ."²

Alexander Herzen

The Italian ambassador in Moscow, Giatano Manzoni, reported to his government on January 27, 1927 that his newly appointed counterpart, Lev Borisovich Kamenev, had departed for Rome that day.³ Manzoni added that he would be "traveling via Warsaw," as though supplying the itinerary confirmed the reality of Kamenev's departure.⁴

Manzoni had reason for concern. Kamenev had waited almost three months before taking up his new post. However reluctant, he was to be the fifth head of mission and third ambassador to represent the Soviet government in Rome. Among that number Kamenev was unique. As Manzoni also reported, Kamenev's departure had involved a send off "by Trotskii and two hundred other persons."⁵ The event, in other words, was sooner a political demonstration by the Opposition to Stalin than a farewell to a diplomat posted abroad.

Kamenev joined more than two dozen members of the Opposition in diplomatic exile, forced upon them by a series of political defeats in the fall of 1926.⁶ He left reluctantly, committed to the Opposition's cause and believing that his place was in Moscow rather than in Rome. While experienced in diplomacy, he was not a professional diplomat as his predecessors had been.⁷ Only two years before he had been one of the most powerful figures in the Soviet regime. The Italian government did not expect Kamenev to put trade and economic interests before ideology. He did not disappoint his hosts.

1. The author wishes to thank archivists in the Archivio Storico Diplomatica and the Archivio Centrale Dello Stato for their kind and courteous assistance. She also wishes to thank the University of Minnesota for a generous Grant-in-Aid which made research in Rome and Capri possible. Finally, thanks to the late J.S.G. Simmons, Librarian, Codrington Library, All Souls College, Oxon. for the gift of Francis Conte's University of Bordeaux Ph.D. dissertation on Rakovskii.

2. Alexander Herzen, *My Past and Thoughts* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), p. 324.

3. Archivio Centrale Dello Stato (henceforth, ACDS), PS-A1-1927, Busta 15, Fasciolo: Kameneff; Jan 27, 1927 Telegramma. N. 291R.

4. *Ibid.*

5. *Ibid.*

6. See Trotskii Archive. b Ms Russ13. T970 (July 1927) for a list of those oppositionists sent into diplomatic exile.

7. No stranger to foreign policy, he had helped to negotiate the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk and joined "the inner councils of . . . Narkomindel," as one of Chicherin's closest advisors. Gordon Craig and Felix Gilbert, eds., *The Diplomats* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1953), 1: 241.

Because Kamenev's ambassadorship constituted an anomaly and was short lived, lasting less than a year, it has been largely overlooked or misinterpreted. But Kamenev was not the diplomatic failure that some historians have suggested.⁸ In fact, as I will show, he attempted with a measure of success to combine his diplomatic and oppositional roles. Although Kamenev served as ambassador until his last major defeat at the Fifteenth Party Congress in December 1927, I will also argue that his short tenure in Italy laid the foundation for active political work until his arrest in December 1934. In the six years left to Kamenev after his return from Rome, he resumed his role as an opponent of Stalin. That role is incomprehensible without reference to what he learned while ambassador to Italy.

Controversial appointment

Kamenev told Mussolini at their only known meeting that he was "grateful to get away from Russia and from Stalin."⁹ Other sources contradict that statement which implied that the new ambassador had a choice in the matter. Manzoni suggested that Kamenev had been manipulated into taking the position. Kamenev "remained the least tactically advanced" by comparison to Trotskii and Zinoviev, the other two members of the Opposition triumvirate; and, therefore, was "the only one of the three who was sent to a foreign post."¹⁰ Others have suggested, as Kamenev maintained to Mussolini, that he had reason to be grateful for the appointment. Stalin had systematically eroded Kamenev's power since 1925. By the summer of 1926, Mikoian had replaced him as Commissar of Trade, his last major official appointment. There followed the directorship of the Lenin Institute where he was "relegated to footnote writing."¹¹

Isaac Deutscher offered the opposite interpretation. He argued that Kamenev's appointment demeaned him: "there could be no more frustrating and humiliating assignment for the former Chairman of the Politburo."¹² In the end Manzoni accepted Kamenev's version that he still controlled his fate. According to the Italian ambassador, Kamenev himself had demanded the position, arguing that his profound knowledge of the Italian Communist Party or PCI (*Partito Comunista Italiano*) made him the logical choice for the post.¹³

Kamenev must have been filled with ambivalence at the prospect of the posting to Rome. His appointment was announced in the second week of November, yet through December he avoided meeting both Manzoni and Platon Kirzhentsev, his predecessor, who had by then returned to Moscow. He also, as noted, repeatedly delayed his departure. He may have feared assassination, the fate of more than one

8. See especially I. A. Khormach, *SSSR-Italia, 1924-1939 gg. Diplomaticheskie i ekonomicheskie otnosheniia* (Moscow: Institut rossiiskoi istorii, 1995), p. 72.

9. ACDS, Busta, 15 Fasciola: Kameneff, Mussolini: Colloquio con Kameneff. Febr. 3, 1927.

10. *Ibid.* Tellegramma N. 230 Jan. 12, 1927.

11. Aleksandrov [A. S. Michelson], *Kto upravliaet Rossiui* (Berlin: Paralola, 1933), p. 164 as cited in Robert V. Daniels, *The Conscience of the Revolution* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1988), p. 279.

12. Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Unarmed: Trotsky: 1921-1929* (New York: Vintage Books, 1959), 2: 338.

13. ACDS, Busta 15, Fdsciola: Kameneff, protocollo N. 0284-A-1, Jan. 17, 1927.

Soviet diplomat abroad. As an oppositionist, he could be the target of Russian émigrés or Stalin's agents. On the other hand Rome may have appeared more enticing than the Lenin Institute. Yet he would be removed from the political fray in Moscow in which he had played a leading role both in power and in the Opposition.

Kamenev's ambivalence could best be seen in his speech to the Plenum of the Comintern Executive Committee on December 14, 1926. In that speech he reached out to the PCI which had recently shown the Opposition a measure of support. He also jeopardized his appointment to Rome. Another motive behind the speech was Kamenev's determination to refute Stalin's address to the group the day before. One scholar has described the speech as "flaming," another as "fiery." In contrast to Stalin, who repeated his argument for socialism in one country, Kamenev spoke in favor of world revolution.¹⁴ He called on the European proletariat to aid in the construction of socialism in the USSR.¹⁵ He had refused to moderate his position to avoid offending the Italian government.

As might have been expected, Mussolini was furious when he learned of the speech. He told Manzoni to inform Litvinov that someone newly appointed as ambassador "cannot be excessively appreciated by the Italian government if he has publicly upheld the necessity of propaganda for world revolution. . . . The appearance in Rome of Kamenev, who has very nearly discredited his own Government as head of the . . . opposition will not serve to improve relations between the two countries. . . ."¹⁶

It seemed that Mussolini's worst fears regarding Kamenev had been confirmed. Upon hearing of his appointment, the Italian premier had warned his envoy of the potential for "excessive political and propagandistic activity by the new Ambassador and his wife who it would not seem possible to forbid from accompanying her husband to Rome." He added, "we would more willingly have the appointment of a career diplomat like Kopp rather than a political figure temporarily in disgrace."¹⁷

Manzoni tried to reassure Mussolini regarding the new Soviet ambassador. "I have known Kamenev since 1924 and have had a favorable impression. . . . His appearance and manner are totally bourgeois. His influence in the party and press and his competence in affairs of state are not doubted."¹⁸ A few days later he suggested that Kamenev's role in the Opposition had been limited. "The position of Kamenev in the opposition has never been as clear as that of Trotskii or Zinoviev. . . . Kamenev could even return to the government,"¹⁹ Manzoni assured a nervous Mussolini.

By the end of November, Manzoni could assuage the Duce's fears concerning the woman whom the Italians mistakenly thought to be Kamenev's wife. "Signora Kameneff [*sic.*] will remain in Moscow."²⁰ The Italian government was misin-

14. V. P. Liubin, "Italo-sovetskie torgovo-ekonomicheskie otnosheniia v 1920-e gody," *Voprosy istorii* 76, no 11 (2002): 67.

15. Khormach, *SSSR-Italiia 1924-1939 gg.*, p. 63.

16. ACDS, Busta 15, Fasciola: Kameneff, Telegramma N 969/347. Dec. 18, 1926.

17. *Ibid.*, Telegramma N. 457/307. Nov. 16, 1926.

18. *Ibid.*, Telegramma N. 655. Nov. 17, 1926.

19. *Ibid.*, Telegramma N. 668. Nov. 19, 1926.

20. *Ibid.*, Telegramma N. 647. Nov. 14, 1926.

formed regarding Kamenev's household. The new ambassador had been married to Trotsky's sister who, as Manzoni reported, had been "for a number of years director of an office for . . . cultural propaganda."²¹ The fear that she might continue that work in Italy had alarmed Mussolini. Kamenev left for Rome accompanied by his second wife T. I. Glebova, who refused an active political role.

The Italian dictator's suggestion that Victor Kopp, the Soviet ambassador to Japan, should serve in Rome derived from someone near at hand. Platon Kirzhentsev, the current Soviet ambassador to Rome, "proposed Kopp. . . . He gives me news about . . . the ambassador in Tokyo," Mussolini informed Manzoni.²² The Duce had a distinct reason for preferring a professional diplomat like Kopp or Kirzhentsev rather than Kamenev.

Kamenev's lack of diplomatic experience stood at the center of the controversy surrounding his appointment. Ideology might pit Fascism against Bolshevism. Economic interests brought Italy and the Soviet Union into partnership. Mussolini drew a careful distinction between ideology and expediency. Although the secretary of the Fascist party or PNF, Augusto Turati, insisted on the great divide between "Rome and Moscow,"²³ Mussolini followed the lead of powerful Italian business interests in drawing closer to the Soviet Union.

Milanese industrialists who had helped to catapult Mussolini into power actively supported trade negotiations with the Soviet Union in the early 1920s. They formed the Campagnia Industriale Commercio Estero (Society of Industrialists for Foreign Trade) or CICE and pressured for diplomatic recognition of the Soviet Union. With the treaty according the Soviet Union full diplomatic recognition, signed in February 1924, Mussolini observed, "party prejudices cannot have a place" in our diplomacy with the Soviet Union "because . . . [with] friendly relations with Russia, we will have an open path to the Slavic world."²⁴ For CICE that path also led to the Causasus and Iran. Its members sought to renew their lucrative pre-war banking connections with those regions. They sought to assist the Soviet Union's program of modernization. In turn, by 1926 the Soviet Union supplied most of Italy's fuel oil.

The same conflict between ideology and economic expediency prevailed on the Soviet side. Kamenev explained the Soviet version of the Moscow-Rome divide when he told a Moscow *guberniia* party conference in 1924 that "Fascism . . . reveals . . . the true nature . . . of the bourgeois dictatorship."²⁵ Such remarks translated into policy frustrated Soviet diplomats. The highly respected negotiator, V. V. Vorovskii, in the midst of serious trade discussions with the Italians, had warned his government about Comintern activity in Italy. A propaganda campaign "can push such an egotistical and irresponsible man like Mussolini into taking upon himself . . . a struggle against . . . Bolshevism. The fate of this question is now in our hands.

21. *Ibid.*, Telegramma N. 1756. Nov. 12, 1926.

22. Insert., Telegramma. N. 749/300. Nov. 12, 1926.

23. R.J.B. Bosworth. *Mussolini* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2003), p. 233.

24. Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv ekonomiki (hereafter RGAE), f. 413, op. 2, d. 1537, l.1 as cited in Liubin, "Italo-sovetskie torgovo-ekonomicheskie otnosheniia v 1920-e gody," p. 61.

25. L. B. Kamenev, "Mezhdunarodnoe i vnutrennoe polozhenie . . ." May 14, 1924, in *Stat'i i rechi* (Moscow-Leningrad: Gosizdat, 1926), 12: 310.

Choosing one or the other tactic [promoting revolution or encouraging normal relations] depends on the Politburo...however we decide it...the decision should be clear and absolute," Vorovskii insisted.²⁶ The diplomat clearly hoped that the Comintern would cease to undermine his efforts at negotiation.

Relations between Italy and the Soviet Union had steadily improved because the Bolshevik regime supported men like Vorovskii and the Commissar of Foreign Trade, L. B. Krasin, whose serious and purposeful negotiations had almost single-handedly convinced Mussolini to grant the Soviet Union *de jure* recognition.²⁷ Trade rather than ideology had come to prevail in Soviet-Italian relations.

1926 was to mark a change. The appointment of numerous oppositionists would surely modify the character of the Soviet diplomatic service. Men like Kirzhentsev were threatened by that dramatic development. Reason enough for him to connive against Kamenev's appointment and argue for another diplomat to replace him. Stalin may have had his own reasons for selecting Kamenev, a choice he surely oversaw.²⁸ He had harbored particular animosity for his rival ever since the Fourteenth Party Congress where Kamenev had denounced Stalin personally.²⁹ There was always the possibility that he could rid himself of Kamenev once and for all. As noted above, Soviet diplomats were at particular risk of assassination. Vorovskii was assassinated in Lausanne in May 1923. Krasin constantly faced threats and assassination attempts.³⁰ Stalin may have contemplated such a fate for Kamenev.³¹

From Kamenev's perspective the most immediate issue was to reach out to the Italian Communist Party or PCI, whether he was in Moscow or Rome. Kamenev was suited to the task. Of all the major oppositionists, he had the most extensive connections with Italy and Italian culture.³² Manzoni's passing observation that "the new Soviet Ambassador . . . was in northern Italy early in the world war [but] does not know central or southern . . . Italy" hardly told the real story of Kamenev's past association with Italy which included a lengthy sojourn there in 1913 to conduct re-

26. Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial'no-politicheskii istorii (hereafter RGASPI), f. 359, op. 1, d.4, l. 46, as cited in G. Adibekov *et al.*, eds., *Politbiuro Tsk RKP (b) - VKP(b) I Europa. Resheniia "Osoboi papki," 1923-1939* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2001), p. 3.

27. S. S. Khromov, ed., "Pis'ma L. B. Krasina k T. V. Miklashevskoi-Krasinnoi," *Voprosi istorii*, 79, no. 10 (2005): 66 (letter of Dec. 21, 1923).

28. See, for example, Stalin's letter to Molotov of Aug. 2, 1926 in Lars T. Lih *et al.*, eds., *Stalin's Letters to Molotov* (New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 1995), p. 117.

29. Leonard Schapiro, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (New York: Vintage Books, 1960), p. 295.

30. Khromov, "Pis'ma L. B. Krasina k T. V. Miklashevskoi-Krasinnoi," p. 76 (letter of Dec. 28, 1924).

31. See discussion of investigation by Soviet and Italian authorities of a plot to assassinate Kamenev. ACDS, Busta 15, Fasciolo: Kameneff. Telegramma N. 3720/1231. Oct. 19, 1927.

32. After the revolution, as head of Mossovet, Kamenev may have supported Studio Italiano, the Italian cultural and study center in Moscow. The Soviet government closed Studio Italiano in 1922. See N. P. Komolov, "Pis'ma P. P. Muratova V. A. Zaitsevoi i B. K. Zaitsevy," in N. P. Komolova *et al.*, eds., *Rossia i Italiia. Russkaia emigratsiia v Italii v XX veke* (Moscow: Nauka, 2003), 5: 284. Before then Kamenev may have been the protector of Studio Italiano, a possibility that warrants further research. Kamenev also chaired the Politbiuro committee that reviewed the draft of the recognition treaty with Italy in 1924. G. N. Sevost'ianov, ed., *Moskva-Rim. Politika i diplomatiia Kremliia, 1920-1939* (Moscow: Nauka, 2003), p. 177.

search on his biography of Herzen.³³ Initially the new ambassador did all in his power to belie another observation of Manzoni that in “appearance and manner” he was “totally bourgeois.” Kamenev’s first task as ambassador consisted of active support for the PCI and for revolution in Italy.

Kamenev and the PCI

The Opposition triumvirate owed a debt of gratitude to the leadership of the PCI. On the eve of the Fifteenth Party Conference in October 1926, Antonio Gramsci sent a letter to the Central Committee of the CPSU regarding the impending confrontation between Stalin and his opponents.

Gramsci was uniquely placed to write such a letter. As a member of the Comintern Executive Committee and General Secretary of the PCI, he moved seamlessly between the Soviet and Italian Communist parties, enjoying respect that transcended his formal responsibilities. Like the leaders of the Opposition, Gramsci was a well-educated and highly cultured individual. His knowledge of Soviet politics rivaled his familiarity with the Italy of Mussolini. He had also served in the Italian parliament.³⁴

Gramsci’s words carried weight for other reasons. He had repeatedly held responsible positions with the Comintern Executive Committee, joining that body in 1922. He knew two members of the Opposition triumvirate well. While he had clashed with Zinoviev over issues connected with the merger of the Italian Communist and Socialist parties, he and Trotskii had worked together more amicably in the Comintern.³⁵ Trotskii included a letter from Gramsci on Italian Futurism in his *Literatura i revoliutsiia*.³⁶ Probably no more fitting defender of the Opposition outside of the CPSU than Gramsci could be found.

Gramsci’s letter to the Central Committee made three main points.³⁷ In the deviseness of the Soviet party, Gramsci saw a threat to “the hard won unity of non-Soviet parties.”³⁸ He offered praise for the Opposition leadership, placing Trotskii, Zinoviev, and Kamenev “among our masters.”³⁹ Gramsci’s final point was “to plead for restraint in the treatment of the . . . Opposition.”⁴⁰ He urged “the majority of the Central Committee of the CPSU . . . not . . . to abuse its victory in the struggle and . . . to avoid excessive measures.”⁴¹

The PCI’s assistance to the Opposition did not end with Gramsci’s letter. At the Seventh Plenum of the Comintern Executive Committee, where Kamenev’s speech

33. ACDS, Busta 15, Fasciolo: Kameneff, Telegramma. N. 230. Jan. 12, 1927.

34. I. V. Grigor’eva. “Rossiiskie stranitsy biografii Gramshi (1922-1926 gg.) Po dokumentam arkhiva Kominterna,” in N. P. Kovolova *et al.*, eds., *Rossa i Italiia v xx veke* (Moscow: Nauka, 1998), 3: 115.

35. *Ibid.*, pp. 99-102, 109.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 109.

37. My discussion follows that of Joan Barth Urban, *Moscow and the Italian Communist Party* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 1986), pp. 56-57.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 56.

39. *Ibid.*

40. *Ibid.*, p. 57.

41. *Ibid.*, pp. 56-57.

nearly jeopardized his appointment to Rome, Palmiro Togliatti, the PCI's delegate to the Executive Committee, successfully challenged the attempt to prevent the Opposition triumvirate from speaking at all.⁴² As a result of Togliatti's defense, Kamenev, along with Trotskii and Zinoviev, was able to denounce Stalin's doctrine of socialism in one country.

The PCI in turn saw hope in Kamenev's appointment. An anonymous report in the Italian Ministry of Interior captured the sense of anticipation on the left that preceded Kamenev's arrival: "Signor Kameneff comes to Italy with an official mandate . . . to inspire energy and courage in the [Italian] organizers of the Third International. According to the Communists, Kameneff is the individual who is necessary in Italy at this moment in which reaction reaches its extreme limit. . . . The Communists see something prophetic in the arrival of Kameneff. . . ."⁴³

Previous Soviet envoys had, as a PCI representative in Moscow complained, shown "extraordinary diplomatic opportunism."⁴⁴ Two ambassadors, for example, K. K. Iurenev and P. M. Kirzhentsev had been reprimanded for lack of revolutionary zeal. The former had invited Mussolini to a Soviet diplomatic reception in the midst of the Matteotti affair when the Duce faced general opprobrium for possible complicity in the murder of the Socialist leader in parliament. The PCI had repeatedly protested Soviet efforts to court Mussolini and condemned "the numerous compliments which Soviet envoys had addressed personally to the dictator."⁴⁵ Italian Communists expected Kamenev to be different.

By the time that the new ambassador arrived in early 1927, the PCI had recently sustained two devastating blows. On November 8 Gramsci was arrested; and the next day the PCI, along with all other opposition parties, was banned.⁴⁶ Overnight, "Italy became a one party state."⁴⁷

Kamenev quickly confirmed the hopes of the PCI that he would be a different kind of Soviet ambassador. He no sooner left the cold and indifferent reception by Mussolini than he rushed to his first meeting with "important members of the Executive Committee of the PCI."⁴⁸ Kamenev announced to the stunned group that they must hold a party congress. Even the much hoped for Kamenev could misstep. His enthusiasm met scant response among the demoralized Italians. They established "neither a date nor a location for a convocation."⁴⁹ More useful than Kamenev's misplaced advice was the 600,000 gold rubles that he brought "in the name of the Soviet government and Comintern" to finance the work of the PCI.⁵⁰

42. *Ibid.*, pp. 58-59.

43. ACDS, Bust 15, Fasciolo: Kameneff. N. 56-901. Al. Dec. 29, 1926.

44. Grigor'eva, "Rossiiskie stranitsky biografii Gramshi," p. 117.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 116.

46. Giuseppe Fiori, *Antonio Gramsci: Life of a Revolutionary*, trans. Tom Nairu (New York: Schocken Books, 1973), pp. 217-18.

47. Bosworth, *Mussolini*, p. 219.

48. ACDS, Busta 15, Fasciolo: Kameneff. Report of Feb. 4, 1927. No number, in French.

49. *Ibid.*

50. *Ibid.*

Some of the money may even have come from the Opposition itself rather than the Soviet government. The Italian government through its embassy paid particular attention to L. T. Smilga, whom the Italian ambassador called “the Opposition’s financier” (il finanziere dell’opposizione).⁵¹ The embassy’s concern with Smilga may have arisen from his role in funding the PCI.

Neither Kamenev himself nor the funding that he provided could help the PCI in 1927. He stood helplessly by and watched the party’s once proud *L’Unita*, founded three years earlier, face the hounding and harassment that the Opposition’s own underground network of presses had experienced in the summer and fall of 1926.⁵² The Italian newspaper appeared only twice in January and perhaps once in February.⁵³ Its “beleaguered staff . . . worked in rapidly improvised headquarters . . . on the outskirts of Genoa.”⁵⁴ In August the newspaper temporarily found refuge in Lugano.

Despite the PCI’s hounded existence at home in 1927, its representatives in the Comintern worked successfully to support the Opposition that year. Kamenev encouraged such support both in Rome and in Moscow. As Manzoni had warned, Kamenev might exploit “the sympathy of some Italian Communists for the Opposition.”⁵⁵ Abroad, Kamenev found a most important ally in that endeavor. He forged an alliance with his fellow diplomat Christain Rakovskii, who since 1923 had served in Paris. Kamenev had told Trotskii in early 1926 that “‘the exile’ of Rakovskii in 1923 was ‘the first administrative repression of importance that Stalin utilized to remove an opponent from the political scene.’”⁵⁶ Once Kamenev shared Rakovsky’s fate, the two found much in common. By the fall of 1927, the Italian embassy reported, they went everywhere in Moscow together.⁵⁷ In Europe, they met to plot Opposition strategy.⁵⁸

Several factors drew Kamenev and Rakovskii together. Kamenev had supported Rakovskii in the spring of 1920 when turmoil in the Ukrainian branch of the party had threatened his expulsion from its leadership.⁵⁹ Rakovskii shared Kamenev’s long familiarity with Italian culture. He had close ties with Italian socialists before World War I⁶⁰, and had been an intimate of V. V. Vorovskii, who had served ably for two years as Soviet representative in Italy before being assassinated. With the

51. ACDS, Busta 15, Fasciola: Kameneff. Telegramma N. 347. Oct. 24, 1927.

52. N. V. Ruban, “Bor’ba partii protiv trotskistko-zinov’evskoi oppozitsii (1925-1926 gg.),” *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, 33, no. 5 (1958): 129.

53. Frank Rosengarten, *The Italian Anti-Fascist Press (1919-1945)* (Cleveland: Case Western Reserve Univ. Press, 1968), p. 78.

54. *Ibid.*

55. ACDS, Busta 15, Fasciola: Kameneff. Telegramma. N. 655. Nov. 17, 1926.

56. Trotskii Archive, b Ms. Russ 13, T 3490b, “Notes of Trotskii on a Conversation with Kamenev.”

57. ACDS, Busta 15, Fasciola: Kameneff. N. 8954 R. Politica intern dell’ URSS. Nov. 26, 1927. See also Archivio Storico Diplomatica (hereafter ASD) AP. Russia. 1919-30 b. 1550 (1927) N. 8954R.

58. Francis Conte, “Christian Rakovski (1873-1941). Essai de biographie politique” (PhD diss., L’Université de Bordeaux; 1973), 2: 681.

59. Gus Fagan, ed., Christian Rakovsky, *Selected Writings on Opposition in the USSR 1923-30* (London: Allison and Busby, 1980), p. 27.

60. *Ibid.*, pp. 18-20.

leadership of the PCI seeking refuge in France in 1927, Kamenev would be drawn to the Soviet representative in that country in order to maintain contacts with Italian Communists across the border. Rakovskii in turn was drawn to the PCI. As one of Trotsky's closest friends and collaborators, he appreciated the support that the PCI rendered to Trotsky in the Comintern that year.⁶¹

The Executive Committee of the Comintern remained one of the last venues where the leaders of the Opposition could hope to speak by 1927. The foreign policy crises of that year enhanced the significance of Comintern debates. Even as ambassador, Kamenev was able to place himself in direct opposition to Stalin's policies in the Comintern. In March he returned to Moscow where he repeated his incendiary remarks of December. He then told the Comintern Executive Committee: "... socialist construction in the USSR will be done only with the collaboration of the revolutionary proletariat in other countries."⁶²

More immediately, the Opposition needed the collaboration of the PCI in its struggle with Stalin. At the Eighth Plenum of the Comintern Executive Committee in May 1927, the PCI delegation skillfully defended both Zinoviev and Trotsky, helping to prevent their immediate expulsion from that body.⁶³ The head of the PCI delegation, Palmiro Togliatti, told his party's Politburo, meeting in Paris, that in forcing a compromise at the Eighth Plenum (Trotsky would be expelled only if he persisted in factional activity), "the attitude of our delegation was crucial [determinante]."⁶⁴

When the Opposition went down to final defeat on the eve of the Fifteenth Party Congress Togliatti and the PCI finally supported the expulsions of Trotsky and Zinoviev from the party and the Comintern. But the PCI delegation made a "perceptibly softer" statement on the expulsions than the Comintern did.⁶⁵ Kamenev and Rakovskii, working abroad and in Moscow, had combined their efforts to encourage opposition sentiment in the PCI. At the same time they had forged their own political bond. While Kamenev is best known for his partnership with Zinoviev, the connection with Rakovskii proved just as important in his last open battles with Stalin in the fall of 1927. Kamenev's attempt to reach out to Rakovskii, following the break-up of the Opposition at the end of that year, encouraged some of his most important oppositional writing.

Kamenev's rapport with Rakovskii surprised no one. The same could not be said of his relationship with his counterpart in Moscow, Vittorio Cerruti, who replaced Manzoni in February 1927, shortly after Kamenev's arrival in Rome. Some have suggested that the Italian government sent the conservative, anti-Bolshevik Cerruti to protest Kamenev's appointment.⁶⁶ If so, Cerruti soon belied expectations. He came to be Kamenev's channel to the Italian government.

61. According to Urban, PCI support for Trotsky continued a policy laid down by Gramsci. *Moscow and the Italian Communist Party*, p. 61.

62. APD A.P. Russia 1919-30b. 1550 (1927). RG63. March 18, 1927.

63. Urban, *Moscow and the Italian Communist Party*, pp. 61-63.

64. Archivio Partito Comunista, 1927, fol. 560: 43-47 as cited *ibid.*, p. 62.

65. *Ibid.*, p. 64.

66. See for example Liubin, "Italo-sovetskie torgovo-ekonomicheskie otnosheniia," p. 67.

Kamenev and Cerruti

More than a simple protest lay behind Cerruti's appointment. His predecessor, Giatano Manzoni, had served as Italian ambassador in Moscow since Italy's recognition of the Soviet Union in February 1924. But by early 1927 Mussolini had lost patience with his ambassador's dispatches from Moscow. "Famous for his Russo-phile views," Manzoni had diligently defended Kamenev's appointment, offering reassurances even after Kamenev's speech in the Comintern calling for an uprising of the European proletariat.⁶⁷ Still more grievous conduct on Manzoni's part occurred over the issue of Bessarabia. Romania had occupied it in 1918, but the Soviet Union continued to claim it. In September 1926 Mussolini signed an agreement of friendship and cooperation with Romania, clearly an indication that he intended to ratify the Bessarabian Protocol, confirming Romania's right to Bessarabia. In doing so he sought greater influence in the Balkans through the new Romanian leader, Gen. A. Averescu, who had been educated in Italy and regarded the Fascist regime "with enthusiasm."⁶⁸

Manzoni made the counter argument. He warned Mussolini that if he took the next step and signed the protocol, it would "evoke the most serious crisis in Soviet-Italian relations" and make the Duce "an enemy of the Russian people, destroying all previous accomplishments. . . ."⁶⁹ Manzoni's ardent defense of Russia's interests in Bessarabia, followed by his support of Kamenev, impelled Mussolini to recall him. The appointment of Cerruti, "a conservative and convinced opponent of Soviet power," appeared to signal a dramatic shift in Italian policy toward the Soviet Union.⁷⁰

Dino Grandi's appointment as Deputy Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs a year earlier had already sent the same signal. Grandi, a committed Fascist who regarded the Soviet Union with antipathy, soon forced out his superior, Salvatore Contrarini. Contrarini, like Manzoni, had represented the "Slavophile" contingent within the Italian foreign policy establishment. With both Manzoni and Contrarini gone, Kamenev faced the hostile figures of Grandi and Cerruti who threatened to join Mussolini in a revision of the lucrative commercial relations that had obtained between the Soviet Union and Italy for the past several years.

The Soviet government feared that Mussolini would use the threatened signing of the Bessarabian Protocol to announce a change in his "eastern" policy. Kamenev sought a meeting with the Duce to discuss the issue; instead, Grandi received him, hiding his anger over the ambassador's recent contact with "a Romanian spy willing to sell state secrets . . . regarding Italy and her policy in the Balkans."⁷¹ He informed Kamenev that Italy's confirmation of Romania's claim to Bessarabia was imminent.

67. *Ibid.*

68. Khormach, *SSSR-Italia 1924-1939* gg., p. 56.

69. *Dokumenty vneshnei politiki SSSR*. 9:317 as cited *ibid.*, p. 57.

70. *Ibid.*, p. 63.

71. ACDS, Busta 15, Fasciolo: Kameneff. Attivita dell' Ambasciatora Febr. 17, 1927.

As expected, Italy's signing of the protocol in March 1927 roiled Soviet-Italian relations. Litvinov told his ambassador to demand an explanation from Mussolini.⁷² Kamenev saw the hand of Britain in the decision and, agreeing with Litvinov, "insisted that the response of the Soviet government be extremely sharp."⁷³ Only the month before, Britain had threatened Moscow with a rupture in trade over Soviet policy in China.⁷⁴ At the same time the Soviet press had reported, "Italy's readiness in the event of complications in China 'to defend its interests in close collaboration with England.'"⁷⁵

Kamenev again had to settle for Grandi instead of Mussolini. Their encounter did not take place until July, four months after the signing of the Bessarabian Protocol, a lapse that signaled the chill in relations between the two countries. But by the time they had their "first visit after ratification of the protocol," the atmosphere between them had improved. Grandi was pleased that Kamenev showed himself to be "most ostentatiously cordial."⁷⁶ The storm over the Bessarabian Protocol had passed, in large measure because Mussolini had conducted himself with restraint two months earlier when Great Britain broke diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. Stalin too sought to diminish confrontation. In response to the British withdrawal of recognition, he ordered that all Comintern and other non-diplomatic operatives be withdrawn from Soviet embassies, a signal that Mussolini could not fail to note when Soviet embassy personnel were recalled from Rome.⁷⁷

By the summer of 1927 with Soviet-Italian relations more stable, Kamenev returned to Moscow. There, with his "totally bourgeois appearance and manner" that had so impressed Manzoni, he reached out to the Italian government through the one official willing to encourage him, namely the old guard conservative, Cerruti. In a relationship that could not have been predicted, Kamenev sooner acted as the emissary of the Opposition than of his government. He sought to convince Cerruti that the Opposition had a chance in the fight with Stalin. There was "dissent in the party organization as well as every region" of the country, Kamenev informed his Italian counterpart. He insisted that "there would [soon] be some sensational changes in Soviet politics."⁷⁸

Cerruti took Kamenev's accounts seriously and appeared to trust him. He also respected Kamenev's expertise in trade and commercial policy which Cerruti shared. Kamenev's explanation that the Opposition arose from "the difficult economic situation" in the country the situation appealed to the Italian ambassador. "... above all there must be attention to commercial policy," Kamenev explained.

72. Arkhiv vneshnei politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii, f. 05, op. 7, d. 25, l. 180 as cited in Khormach, *SSSR-Italia 1924-1929 gg.*, p. 65.

73. *Ibid.*, d. 246, l. 8 as cited *ibid.*

74. *Ibid.*, p. 64.

75. *Izvestiia*, Feb. 9, 1927 as cited *ibid.*, p. 64.

76. ASD. AP Russia 1919-30. B1548 (1927). Telegramma N. 1124/199R. July 8, 1927.

77. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 162, d. 5, l. 24 as cited in *Politbiuro Tsk RkP(b) - VKP (b) i Evropa*, p. 100.

78. ACDS, Busta 15, Fasciolo:Kameneff; Telegramma N. 5247. July 27, 1927.

“... precisely my thought,” Cerruti responded. He also praised Kamenev’s policy on trade.⁷⁹

Like Kamenev, Cerruti was no stranger to trade and commercial issues. He represented the interests of Fiat in Russia as much as those of his own government. He had strong ties to F. Marinotti, the head of Fiat and one of the leaders of CICE.⁸⁰ Cerruti therefore represented those Milanese industrialists who had been so important both to Mussolini’s rise and to the expansion of commercial and diplomatic connections with the Soviet Union. Kamenev’s policies would further the interests of Cerruti’s patrons. Cerruti also appreciated what he perceived to be Kamenev’s “political restraint,” warning that diplomatic circles believed that the Opposition otherwise pressed too hard. Such shared concerns and policies encouraged two very different figures to conduct “behind the scenes diplomacy [retroscena diplomatica].”⁸¹

Cerruti for a time accepted Kamenev’s optimistic assessment of the Opposition’s chances in the summer of 1927. He reported in August that Kamenev had confronted Stalin and “won a great victory over” the General Secretary.⁸² Circumstances in fact were not as Cerruti had recounted. Kamenev had misinformed the Italian ambassador about the Opposition’s true state and his own role in its fate. In early August Stalin attempted to expel Trotskii and Zinoviev from the Central Committee. Ordzhonikidze as Chairman of the Central Control Commission brokered a compromise that saved their positions.⁸³ Cerruti reported that Kamenev’s confrontation with Stalin “stopped the expulsions.” The Opposition could now “speak freely at party gatherings and raise their own motions and counter motions.”⁸⁴

Kamenev’s “great victory” over Stalin constituted no more than a compromise brokered by Ordzhonikidze. Cerruti gave credence to his account of the Kamenev-Stalin confrontation, explaining that it came “in confidence from someone who is in contact with members of the government party. . . .”⁸⁵ Kamenev was so often at Cerruti’s when he was in Moscow that their familiarity began to annoy Chicherin. It is safe to conclude that most of what Cerruti knew about the Opposition came from Kamenev.

Kamenev’s unjustified optimism and misinformation reported to Cerruti could not be sustained for long. As Trotskii had predicted to Ordzhonikidze in June 1927, “the extirpation of the Opposition was only a matter of time.”⁸⁶ Through Cerruti, Kamenev had tried to convince an important trading partner otherwise. He insisted through the summer of 1927 that the Opposition enjoyed legitimacy and would triumph, bringing him and his fellow triumvirs back into power. The ploy directed at

79. *Ibid.*

80. Arhiv Politbiuro Russkoi Federatsii (hereafter APRF) f.3, op. 65, d. 241, l. 135-36. Mikoian to Politburo. May 23, 1927 as cited in *Moskva-Rim*, p. 226.

81. ACDS, Busta 15, Fasciolo:Kameneff. Attivita dell’Ambasciatura Feb. 17, 1927.

82. *Ibid.*, N4569R, Aug. 16, 1927.

83. Schapiro, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, p. 304.

84. ACDS, Busta 15, Fasciolo: Kameneff, N.4569R, Aug. 16, 1927.

85. *Ibid.*

86. Trotskii Archive, T 965. June 28, 1927.

an envoy whose sober conservatism and anti-Soviet attitude encouraged Mussolini's trust, appeared to work, ironically on the very eve of the Opposition's collapse. Yet even in defeat, Cerruti continued to hold the Opposition in high regard. He regretted their loss because they (Kamenev and his ally Rakovskii, in particular) were the ones with "the necessary qualifications to represent the Soviet Union abroad."⁸⁷

Given Cerruti's respect for Kamenev and their closeness, the possibility exists that the Italian ambassador offered the Opposition advice regarding China in the crucial summer of 1927. Cerruti's previous post before Moscow had been Beijing. The failure of Stalin's policy in China became the Opposition's focus following the Kuomintang's massacre of Chinese Communists in May. The possibility remains speculative. Cerruti could hardly include word of such discussions with Oppositionists in his diplomatic dispatches, even if he believed in the Opposition's superiority and, for a time, in its ultimate triumph.

Kamenev cultivated one figure that summer who did provide tangible support to the Opposition. The writer Maksim Gor'kii shared his Italian exile. More significantly, Gor'kii shared with Kamenev the Italian cultural circles which had long embraced the Russian writer.

Kamenev and Gor'kii

Like Kamenev, Gor'kii's ties to Italy were deep and extended over several decades. Italy had twice been his place of refuge. In December 1906 he had fled Tsarist repression following the revolution of 1905. In October 1924 he settled there again, having left the Soviet Union two years earlier.

In Gor'kii's first sojourn abroad he resided in Capri where he forged "strong connections . . . with Italian creative society" and his works, published in Italian, "acquired fame on Italian soil."⁸⁸ Gor'kii's presence on Capri encouraged the formation of an extensive Russian colony whose influence proved so pervasive that even the Italian "cab drivers spoke a smattering of Russian"⁸⁹

For Gor'kii, the Capri years, ending in 1913, proved to be "a period of fruitful creativity."⁹⁰ He was grateful that Mussolini allowed him to return, even if the Duce did not greet him with open arms. The Russian-Italian library that Gor'kii had founded in Capri was shut down, and he was forbidden to reside on the island again because of its past associations with Russian radicalism. He could live no closer to his beloved Capri than Sorrento on the main land. It was there that Kamenev visited the writer, traveling south from Rome. They renewed a long standing acquaintance and swam together off the Amalfi coast.⁹¹

Kamenev, as Lenin's emissary, had made such trips to see Gor'kii on Capri during the Bolshevik leader's conflict with A. A. Bogdanov which Gor'kii tried to me-

87. ACDS, Busta 15, Fasciolo:Kameneff; Telegramma N 2444R. Nov. 14, 1927.

88. I. A. Reviakina, "Russkii Kapri (1907-1914)," in N. P. Komolova *et al.*, eds, *Rossia i Italiia. Russkaia emigratsiia v Italii v XX veke* (Moscow: Nauka, 2003), 5: 13.

89. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

90. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

91. The author possesses photographs of Gor'kii and Kamenev swimming together off the Amalfi coast, the gift of V. L. Glebov, Kamenev's son.

diate.⁹² On the eve of the October Revolution, Kamenev joined Zinoviev in warning of the impending coup in Gor'kii's anti-Bolshevik newspaper, *Novaia Zhizn'*. After the revolution, with both Kamenev and Gor'kii back in Lenin's good graces and Kamenev one of the most powerful figures in the new regime, they combined forces for the sake of Russian culture. When Gor'kii interceded on behalf of academics with ties to the Kadet Party who had been arrested, Kamenev "quickly promised to free them and to be available [to help] any time."⁹³ A year later in 1920, Kamenev collaborated with Gor'kii to make the classics of world literature available to the newly literate Soviet public.⁹⁴

Their collaboration ended under painful circumstances. In the fall of 1921, the Politburo ordered Gor'kii's Famine Relief Committee disbanded because of anti-Soviet remarks made in its meetings. Gor'kii confronted Kamenev in tears, "you have made of me a provocateur."⁹⁵ The wound healed; and from Sorrento in 1925 Gor'kii wrote Bukharin to pass on "my sincere regards to . . . Rykov . . . Dzerzhinskii, and . . . Kamenev. . . ."⁹⁶ By 1927 Gor'kii and Kamenev could observe the similarities in Stalin and Mussolini's consolidation of power, as they renewed their friendship in exile.

They would also be aware of the Italian scholar who had emerged as the conscience of liberal Italy and one of Mussolini's most formidable opponents, namely Benedetto Croce. Not only was Croce the most respected scholar in Italy, but he enjoyed general acclaim along with a popular following. Under Mussolini "the study of Croce was so intense and widespread" among young people that the Fascist Minister of Education, Giovanni Gentile, feared both to prohibit Croce's works and to allow them in the curriculum.⁹⁷

Croce had begun as a supporter of Fascism; but by 1925, following the murder of the Socialist leader Matteotti and the initiation of repressive policies, he broke with the regime. At the time that Kamenev arrived in Rome, Croce had become "the custodian of the Risorgimento liberal tradition and . . . the symbol of . . . resistance to . . . Mussolini."⁹⁸

Several factors would have drawn Kamenev to Croce. The Italian scholar now condemned Fascism as "one of the most radical attempts to break the Italian con-

92. Robert C. Williams, *The Other Bolsheviks: Lenin and His Critics, 1904-1914* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1986), p. 109.

93. V. A. Keldysh et al., eds., *Gor'kii i ego ephoka. Materialy i issledovaniia. Neizvestnyi Gor'kii* (Moscow: Nasledie, 1994), 3: 49.

94. See Kamenev-Gor'kii correspondence in Arkhiv A. M. Gor'kogo. Institut mirovoi literatury. KG-P/PTL.

95. Keldysh et al., eds., *Gor'kii i ego epokha. Materialy i issledovaniia. Neizvestnyi Gor'kii*, 3: 50. V. Khodasevich, *Vospominaniia o Gor'kom* (Moscow, 1989), p. 31 as cited in *Neizvestnyi Gor'ky*, pp. 66-67.

96. Andrew Barratt and Barry Scherr, eds., *Maxim Gorky: Selected Letters* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1997), p. 256 (letter of June 23, 1925).

97. Rosengarten, *The Italian anti-Fascist Press*, p. 75.

98. Fabio Fernando Rizzi, *Benedetto Croce and Italian Fascism* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 2003), p. 3.

nection with the European intelligentsia. . . .”⁹⁹ Mussolini’s dictatorship in one country, as Croce described it, resembled Stalin’s self-proclaimed policy of socialism in one country. The results were the same. Both dictators attempted to forge cultural isolation along with their monopoly of power. Kamenev deplored the blow to Russia’s integration with the West. He and Gor’kii, after all, had collaborated to keep European culture alive in the new Soviet state earlier in the decade.

Croce, by 1927, had modified his harsh anti-Marxist stand. One of the founders of the socialist newspaper, *Aventi*, he, like Mussolini, who had once edited *Aventi*, had broken with socialism years before. Croce nonetheless conducted “a continuous dialogue” with Gramsci.¹⁰⁰ By the mid-1920s, his “criticism of socialism” was “sharp but respectful.”¹⁰¹ He offered “an almost Marxist interpretation of fascism on one occasion.”¹⁰² In 1927 Croce’s new edition of his essays on Marxism deleted the sarcasm of an earlier edition.¹⁰³

Such facts suggest that Kamenev and Croce would have found few if any barriers to a meeting. Gor’kii could have arranged it. He may have encountered Croce in his first exile. The historian had long resided in Naples, not far from Capri. In Sorrento, Gor’kii would have been a short ride across the Gulf of Naples from Croce, who continued to reside in Naples, a mere 50 kilometers away. Even if he and Kamenev never met, Croce’s ideas and example were close at hand.

Significantly, 1927 proved to be one of Croce’s most prolific periods of oppositional writing. In that year he completed his *History of Italy, 1870-1915*. The work which appeared in January 1928 created an instant sensation. In it he had successfully “defended liberal Italy from the denigrations of fascism.”¹⁰⁴ Through a work of scholarship, Croce had produced “a political protest” against Mussolini.¹⁰⁵ Croce’s friend, Giacchino Volpe, was more dubious about such a purpose. He termed it “an historical document of the years in which it appeared [rather] than . . . a . . . reconstruction with historical value.”¹⁰⁶ For Kamenev the message was nonetheless clear. The past could serve the political purposes of the present.

Croce employed another historical period to condemn the Duce. In reviews for his journal *La Critica*, he suggested that Mussolini was a new Prince, as deceitful and conniving as Machiavelli’s Renaissance sovereign.¹⁰⁷ Kamenev later observed Stalin’s resemblance to Machiavelli’s protagonist. Kamenev, it should be noted, was no stranger to Machiavelli. In Siberian exile he introduced Stalin to *The Prince*.¹⁰⁸ Croce in the 1920s wrote extensively on the similarities between twenti-

99. Gobetti, *Scritti Politici*, 881 as cited *ibid.*, p. 101.

100. Rizzi, *Benedetto Croce and Italian Fascism*, p. 5.

101. *Ibid.*, p. 99.

102. *Ibid.*

103. *Ibid.*, pp. 135-36.

104. *Ibid.*, p. 140.

105. *Ibid.*, p. 142.

106. Gioacchino Volpe, *L'Italia in Cammino*, ed. Giovanni Belardelli (Bari: Laterza, 1991), p. 16 as cited in Rizzi, *Benedetto Croce and Italian Fascism*, p. 152.

107. *Ibid.*, p. 79.

108. Robert. C. Tucker, *Stalin as Revolutionary, 1879-1929* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1973), p.

eth century dictators and their sixteenth-century Florentine predecessor, a comparison that Kamenev would have readily appreciated. If Kamenev and Croce met, they would surely have discussed the latter's work in progress, the *History of Italy* as well as his extensive writing on Machiavelli. If they did not meet, Kamenev could not have avoided awareness of Croce's role as the moral and intellectual embodiment of opposition to Mussolini.

Unlike Croce, who in secret encouraged conspiratorial activity against the Duce, Kamenev returned to Moscow in September and threw caution to the winds. In company with Rakovskii, he denounced Stalin at rallies and meetings in the weeks before the tenth anniversary of the revolution. His recall became inevitable. Chicherin informed Cerruti in mid-November that the ambassador "had completely lost the trust of the Soviet government."¹⁰⁹ The official termination of Kamenev's diplomatic appointment occurred on December 12, 1927.¹¹⁰

Conclusion

Past and present assessments of Kamenev's role as ambassador are mixed. A critical observer in the Italian Foreign Ministry claimed that "Kamenev found no sympathy in Italian government or diplomatic circles," because of membership in "the ultra left opposition."¹¹¹ The Russian scholar of Italy, I. A. Khormach, has suggested that replacing Kamenev with D. I. Kurskii "rendered a beneficial influence on the stable development of Soviet-Italian relations."¹¹² To Khormach, as to the Italian government, Kamenev had been sooner an Oppositionist than a diplomat. Mussolini, who deplored Kamenev's appointment in the first place, upon meeting the new ambassador, had damned him with faint praise: He was at least more intelligent than Kirzhentsev, his predecessor, observed the Duce.¹¹³

Those who knew Kamenev best provided a very different assessment. To Cerruti, Kamenev was someone "enlivened by good will" and competent "to represent the Soviet Union abroad."¹¹⁴ He could pay Kamenev no higher compliment than to take him as his source on Soviet domestic politics. Chicherin in turn told Cerruti how much he had come to appreciate Kamenev's "words . . . measured and unbiased . . . and his reports . . . so interesting on the growth of Fascism."¹¹⁵

In making such reports, Kamenev must have noted the numerous parallels between Stalin and Mussolini. Stalin became General Secretary of the party in the same year that Mussolini came to power in Rome. The Duce consolidated his power in 1925-1928, using a process of repression that began with the murder of Matteotti. Stalin began to move against Kamenev and Zinoviev in 1925. The Matteotti affair nearly destroyed Mussolini. Lenin's Testament, which termed Stalin "too rude,"

212.

109. ACDS, Busta 15. Fasciolo:Kameneff. Telegramma. N. 2444R. Nov. 14, 1927.

110. ASD. AP Russia 1919-30. B. 1549 (1927). Telegramma. N9711R. Dec. 30, 1927.

111. ACDS, Busta 15. Fasciolo:Kameneff. protocollo n. 0283-A-1. Oct. 1, 1927 (in French).

112. Khormach, *SSSR-Italia 1924-1929 gg.*, p. 72.

113. ACDS, Busta 15. Fasciolo:Kameneff. Colloquio con Kameneff. Febr. 3, 1927.

114. *Ibid.*, Telegramma N. 2444R. Nov. 14, 1927.

115. *Ibid.*

could have done the same to the General Secretary. It became an issue in the party at the same time that Matteotti was murdered. The hounding of the banned PCI, which Kamenev observed in Rome, painfully resembled Stalin's repeated assaults against the Opposition in 1926-1927. The cult of Stalin mirrored that of Mussolini. Both phenomena emerged in the press of their respective countries in the mid-1920s.¹¹⁶

Such comparisons would bring Kamenev back to Croce, who so skillfully interpreted Italian history to condemn Mussolini. Volpe's observation that Croce's *History of Italy* constituted "an historical document of the years in which it appeared . . .,"¹¹⁷ found an echo in Kamenev's biography of Chernyshevskii, that appeared nine months after Croce's work: "We must study Chernyshevskii not so much for what he tells us about his time, as for what he tells us about our own," Kamenev wrote in the introduction.¹¹⁸

Upon his return from Rome, Kamenev and his allies entered into an open confrontation with the Stalinist majority. The triumvirate was expelled from the party and soon split apart. Trotskii and his supporters condemned Kamenev and Zinoviev for seeking to regain admission to the party. They chose exile rather than compromise with Stalin. Rakovskii's own wilderness years were spent in Astrakhan' and Saratov, the very places to which Chernyshevskii had been consigned over sixty years earlier.

Bereft of politics, Kamenev in 1928 turned to literary criticism and biography. He had assumed the role of Croce, producing veiled yet trenchant criticism of Stalin just as Croce did of Mussolini. In his accounts of Chernyshevskii, the leftist martyr of Tsarism became a symbol for the martyrdom of the Left Opposition to Stalin. In recounting Chernyshevskii's experience in exile, Kamenev attempted to reach out to Rakovskii, languishing where Chernyshevskii had once been confined. He combined the Aesopian tradition of Russian radicalism with the creation of a contemporary past which Croce had perfected.

The Italian scholar's use of Machiavelli encouraged Kamenev to employ *The Prince* as a source of historical analogies as well as a practical guide to politics. His speech to the Seventeenth Party Congress in 1934 made a veiled comparison between the new Prince and the old. Kamenev repeated the comparison in the introduction to the works of Machiavelli which he published as head of the Academia publishing house that same year. Both the speech to the party congress and the directorship of Academia were made possible by Gor'kii, who intervened with Stalin on Kamenev's behalf.¹¹⁹ Gor'kii understood the role that Kamenev could play as a

116. Anthony L. Cardoza, *Benito Mussolini: The First Fascist* (New York: Longman, 2005), p. 76.

117. Rizzo, *Benedetto Croce and Italian Fascism*, p. 152. See fn. 105.

118. L. B. Kamenev, ed., *N. G. Chernyshevskii. Literaturnoe nasledie* (Moscow-Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1928), 1: 3.

119. Boris I. Nicolaevsky, *Power and the Soviet Elite*, Janet D. Zagoria, ed. (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1975), p. 46.

“literary oppositionist,” having observed Croce’s success (and survival) under similar oppressive circumstances.

In sum, Kamenev’s brief appointment as Soviet ambassador to Rome cannot be branded as irrelevant or a failure. He managed to convince the hard nosed, conservative Cerruti of the significance of the Opposition and for a time of its potential as well. Even Cerruti lamented the Opposition’s defeat in November 1927. Kamenev forged a close bond with Gor’kii, whose protection and intercession made it possible for him to recreate in the Soviet Union the example of Croce in Italy. Kamenev learned in Rome that it was better to work for Stalin’s defeat in the role of a Croce than as a Gramsci, languishing in interminable confinement. Unfortunately, Kamenev ended neither as a Croce nor a Gramsci, but as a Matteotti. He had nonetheless turned a brief diplomatic exile into a foundation on which to build the rest of his political career.

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